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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: AFTERMATH OF THE PRESIDENTIAL RECALL
ATTEMPT, MIDDLE EAST, NORTH KOREA

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies continued to focus their coverage July 15-17 on a declaration by some pro-Green scholars on Saturday, calling for President Chen Shui-bian's resignation, and Chen's vow to stay on. News coverage also focused on the damage Tropical Storm Bilis did to southern Taiwan, and developments in the Donald Keyser espionage case. Only the three local English-language papers front-paged wire service reports about Israel's bombing of Hezbollah targets in Lebanon. The pro-status quo "China Times" ran a front-page banner headline July 17 that said "With Pro-independence Heavyweights' Strong Support, Urge [Chen] to Rectify Taiwan's Name and Write New Constitution; Bian: No Intention to Step Down." The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" also ran a front-page banner headline July 17 that read "Bian Considers Quitting DPP to Quell Public Outrage." Taiwan's biggest daily, the pro-independence "Liberty Times," however, ran a banner headline on page three July 17 that said "President Chen: Will Seriously Check on Cross-Straight Trade and Economics."

¶2. The Chinese-language papers continued to editorialize on the pro-Green scholars' call for Chen's resignation. A "Liberty Times" editorial suggests that Chen listen to the majority of Taiwan people's opinion and not to resign. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" also urged Chen to respect the pro-Green scholars' call for clean politics, but believes that it is inappropriate for Chen to resign now. An opinion piece in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" said the United States has faith in Taiwan's democracy and will continue to express concern about Taiwan. Editorials in the "China Times" and pro-unification "United Daily News," however, urged President Chen and the DPP to listen to and positively respond to the pro-Green scholars' declaration. Only one English-language paper editorialized on the conflict in the Middle East; a "Taipei Times" editorial criticized the United States for playing down Israel's bombing of Lebanon and rationalizing the latter's acts of "excessive aggression." An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post," on the other hand, criticized Beijing for dancing to Pyongyang's tune. A separate "China Post" editorial discussed U.S. President Bush's attitude toward Pyongyang's recent test-firing of missiles, saying Bush "has learned the hard way that brutal force and unilateralism do not work, even for the world's sole superpower." End summary.

¶3. Aftermath of Presidential Recall Attempt

A) "Listening to Public Opinion Is Essential for Governing a Country"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] editorialized (7/17):

"... Six years ago, many people were encouraged by the DPP's nativist, clean reform image and hoped that it would lead Taiwan to become a normal country after it held the reins. But the fact that many of the DPP's policies have deviated from the nativist line indicates that even the party's pledge to Taiwan-centered values has begun to flag. In the end, more and more people believe that the DPP is no different from the KMT. The Taiwanese people at first hoped that the DPP could help to reform the KMT, but it turned out that several years later, another KMT was created. The DPP really needs to strictly review itself.

"The pro-Green scholars' pathological analysis of Taiwan's democracy is their freedom of speech, but it is after all the idea of just a few people and cannot represent the wishes of a majority of the Taiwanese people. These scholars expected President Chen to seriously consider resigning from the presidency on his own accord. But Chen was elected by a majority of the Taiwanese people, and like the government's various policies, he must listen to a majority of the people's views, and not just those of a few. ..."

B) "How to Realize Our Responsibility"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (7/17):

"... The push for Chen's resignation from within the broad pro-DPP camp has cast another shadow over the president's fragile leadership in the wake of a recently failed recall drive by the 'pan-blue' alliance of the former ruling Kuomintang and the People First Party.

We share the activists' sense of disappointment with President Chen's failure to exercise stricter discipline on his family and staff, to engage in honest re-examination and, even more important, to adopt clear measures to reform and cleanse the governing party and our society as a whole. ...

"We also hope that their initiative will be treated with respect in the pan-green camp and also not be twisted into simply a demand for

President Chen's resignation, a proposal which we believe is inappropriate. ... We urge Chen and the DPP to respond positively to the issues raised by the pan-green signatory scholars with actions to reinforce the soundness of democratic and justice systems with 'sunshine' laws and other measures as well as by launching through internal party reform to rebuild the DPP's own integrity and re-establish its commitment to democratic values. ..."

C) "The US Has Faith in Our Democracy and Society"

Huang Yung-jui, a political commentator based in Taipei, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (7/16):

"... The aforementioned remarks made by various US government officials show that Taiwan is improving its democratic system and that Taiwan as a stable society, particularly with regard to freedom of speech and other elements that constitute a strong civil society.

This means that US confidence concerning Taiwan is not based on particular individuals but on Taiwan's system. ... I also believe that US government officials will continue to express concern about Taiwan and pin their hopes on the Taiwanese. Moreover, they are displeased with the pan-blue camp and the pro-China media outlets' constant opposition to the arms procurement budget in the legislature, and their attempt to take over power by any means."

D) "Pro-Green Scholars' Statement Will Be DPP's Final Trial"

The pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] noted in an editorial (7/17):

"... When compared with all the previous criticisms against President Chen and the DPP, the tone of the statement published by the scholars and social activists was in reality very gentle. It can hardly be viewed as a criticism. The language they used to call on Chen and the DPP did not at all cover up their identification with, and pledge of, traditional Green camp ideals. To put it more directly, the statement is more like an appeal to the DPP's spirit and an attempt to save the party from its eventual collapse by

addressing Chen's morality and emotions, rather than a declaration to oust Bian or criticize the DPP. ... In the next few days, we will monitor whether the DPP remains a political party in which we can put our hopes! ..."

E) "'Identification with Democracy' Is 'Identification with Taiwan': Support and Supplement for July 15 Declaration"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (7/15):

"... To sum up, the goal of this declaration is: The DPP must not belittle itself or look down on itself as 'the imperial guards that defend Chen Shui-bian's corrupt family.' Instead, they should look upon themselves as guardians of 'Taiwan identity' and 'democracy.' If Chen can resign on his own accord and grasp the last chance of political proactiveness, he may be able to offer his party a way to survive. By the same token, if the DPP can help Chen to step down on his own accord, it might be able to put the pan-Green camp back on the high ground of political morality. ..."

¶4. Middle East

"Washington Fiddles, Lebanon Burns"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (7/15):

"... Israel has been subjected to horrific and despicable attacks by people who have lost all sense of humanity such that they would dismember the bodies of civilians of all faiths. But Israel has also perpetrated unjust treatment against Palestinians for which it is rarely held to account. Perhaps it is only ever a matter of time before this kind of situation so degrades the morality of nations - even a region - that the unthinkable becomes the best option. It is critical that a powerful mediator be firm but fair to both sides. The US, however, continues to play down Israeli excesses while effectively rebuking all Palestinians - and now all Lebanese - for the actions of extremist minorities.

"If the US continues to rationalize acts of excessive aggression, perhaps Taiwan's military may take some comfort from the possibility that strikes against major Chinese infrastructure such as the Three Gorges Dam and residential areas can be put on the table. Actually, there is no comfort to be had whatsoever, because Taiwan has much more to lose if such atrocities become feasible. As long as the US plays down Israel's maverick behavior, the danger of Tehran and Beijing's militant governments aping Tel Aviv grows ever larger."

¶5. North Korea

A) "Dancing to Kim's Tune"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] commented in an editorial (7/15):

"... It is irresponsible for Beijing to prop up a notorious rogue state that poses a threat to its neighbors with nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. A nuclear North Korea in Beijing's backyard is not in the mainland's interests. It is unwise for Beijing to encourage Kim to make provocations and destabilize the region. Beijing's support for Pyongyang has already tarnished its international image as a responsible power. But that's nothing compared with the dire consequences such connivance would produce.
..."

"So far, Beijing has failed to play a leading role in defusing the crisis. Beijing should feel embarrassed by Pyongyang's defiance. As a regional power, Beijing still has time to save face by taking the initiative to work out a diplomatic settlement. Reconvening the six-party talks by twisting Kim Jong-il's arm is an urgent task for Beijing. Failing to do that could result not only in a nuclear North Korea, but also a re-armed, possibly a nuclear Japan."

B) "The Mellowing of Bush"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] commented in a separate editorial (7/15):

"It goes without saying that Kim Jong-il's test firing is a surprise for the world. Perhaps more so is the mild reaction to the outrage from U.S. President George W. Bush. ... Nowadays, President Bush talks less about the use of force as a means to settle international disputes than the employment of diplomacy and multilateral negotiations to defuse crises, such as Kim's missile testing and Iran's nuclear program. Apparently, he has learned the hard way that brutal force and unilateralism do not work, even for the world's sole superpower."

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